



TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

James White

*House District 19
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, February 12, 2021

Contact: Saul Mendoza
(512) 463-0490

Human Trafficking Awareness Advocacy Day and Installation of Legislative Support Staff - Weekly Legislative Update 1/29/21 -

(Austin, TX) - The Legislature convened once again this week to administer the Oath of Office to our support staff. Our parliamentarians, Chief Clerk, Journal Clerk, Voting Clerk, Reading Clerk, Sergeant-at-Arms, Doorkeeper, Committee Coordinator, House Business Executive Director, and their support staff must take this oath per Section 301.006 of the Government Code. These individuals are vital to the legislative proceedings and it is of the utmost importance that they do their jobs by upholding the U.S. and Texas Constitutions.

Although it took place on January 11th, 2021, anti-human trafficking advocates observed National Human Trafficking Awareness Day at the Texas Capitol on Tuesday, January 26th, 2021. We dedicate this day to the awareness and prevention of the inhumane and illegal practices of human trafficking. Our reflection on this day reminds us that human trafficking can affect people of any race or economic background and that anyone can and must do their part to prevent it. This day of observance reminds us that human trafficking includes not only sex trafficking but also labor trafficking of adults and minors. Although the word trafficking implies "movement," this is not always the case. Sex and labor trafficking can take place within our communities without the smuggling of a human being. I am proud to have worked and voted for legislation that has brought more awareness and given the Office of the Attorney General and law enforcement the necessary tools to prosecute and investigate these crimes. I was proud to speak at the Human Trafficking Advocacy Day Virtual Rally hosted by the great folks at Children at Risk. Additionally, my staff participated in the weekly briefing on Human Trafficking presented by the Office of the Attorney General and a separate briefing held by the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team. The 84th Legislature created the Child Sex Trafficking Team under the Governor's Public Safety Office. Their primary goal is the development of a holistic response to child sex trafficking.

I have been filing legislation since the Chief Clerk's office opened up the system for early filing back in November. Staff and I meet regularly to discuss what legislation we have filed, drafts we have available to file, and what drafts we have requested for future filing. This week, I want to highlight a few bills that I have filed that rein in excessive government overreach and provide more liberty and transparency to the individual.



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HB 629 & HJR 40

Over the past few months, Texans have raised concerns regarding the Governor's use of emergency orders without any apparent formal involvement of the Legislature or the use of data-driven approaches. This is one of many bills that my House colleagues and I will file this session to reform the Texas Disaster Act. This legislation removes the power to control the sale, transportation, and use of alcoholic beverages, weapons, and ammunition. It also prevents the regulation of storing explosives or flammable materials by the Governor of Texas during a state of emergency. Regardless the nature of disaster, no government official in the U.S. and definitely not in Texas should override constitutional firearms rights. Undoubtedly, this is an overreach of government and the Legislature should eliminate future overreach from Texas law.

HB 821

This legislation ties the Texas License to Carry (LTC) eligibility requirements to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). This would allow Texas residents age 21 and over to carry a concealed handgun without a permit if said person is not prohibited by applicable federal or state law from possessing a firearm. Any person who can currently purchase a firearm would be able to carry a firearm either openly or in a concealed manner as granted by the Texas Constitution and the 2nd Amendment.

House Bill (HB) 543

This is legislation that I have worked on with Lucretia Brown of the Working Dog Alliance. I am proud to work with her on this legislation and represent her in the Texas House.

This legislation prohibits a governmental body from imposing any regulations that would terminate, ban, or impose financial hardship on the use of a working animal or business who employs a working animal. Working animals serve a critical role in the lives of many Texans today for the purposes of education, entertainment, ranching, service, and exhibition.

Governmental bans destroy animal ownership, job opportunities, and revenue that animal exhibitors, carriage companies, and others bring to the state. They also deny families access to animal exhibits or opportunities to view or interact with animals. Additionally, these unnecessary bans often rely on the false premise that anyone who raises, breeds, or works with animals--especially working animals--are abusing them. In fact, those involved with working animals, animal exhibiting, circuses, carriage horses, and other working animals are licensed, inspected, and regulated businesses practicing time-tested animal husbandry that ensures the health of both people and animals.



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HB 1354

The 1st Amendment right of freedom of religion is indispensable. Without freedom of religion there is no freedom of speech, association, or petition. During the COVID-19 outbreak, I heard too many heartbreaking stories of Texans alienated from their clergy at the most sensitive time of their lives when they are isolated in a congregant living center or fighting for their life in a hospital. This legislation proposes the creation of protocols grounded in science, facilitates safety, and respects our precious constitutional religious freedoms.

HB 1397

Our elections are the means which the citizens exhibit their sovereignty. Elections also remind the elected officials that they are subordinate to the Constitution and People, respectively. Therefore, it is important that our citizens have confidence in their fellow citizens who conduct our elections and that we know who manufactures our election equipment. Just as we know the private sector vendors that provide equipment and services for our military, it only makes sense that we know who provides the equipment and services for our elections, which determine who sends those very men and women in harms way in defense of our freedoms. This legislation provides more transparency from your state and local governments regarding the ownership and vendors of any voting equipment that is approved and used in the administration of our elections. The bill requires that any contract made must disclose any person or entity that has five percent or more ownership interest in the vendor, vendor's parent company, and subsidiary or affiliate of the vendor.

HJR 45

This resolution urges the United States Congress to call a Convention of States under Article V of the U.S. Constitution for the purpose of constitutionally limiting the number of justices on the Supreme Court of the United States to nine. The Supreme Court is vital to the function of our government and each duly elected U.S. president may appoint a new justice to fill any vacancies with the approval of Congress. It is not appropriate to subvert the Constitution by decreasing or increasing the number of members of the court by a sitting president simply to adjust the make up of the court to fit a preferred political ideology.

A huge congratulations to Gideon Jordan of Jasper High School who placed 2nd in trumpet at the UIL Area Band competition. His performance has earned him a spot in the Texas All-State Band. We are extremely proud of him and his representation of the Bulldog community!



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"Fran" Wyche a long-time Tyler county resident also celebrated her 100th birthday a few days ago. I am sure she and her family are overjoyed for achieving this milestone birthday. Mrs. Wyche is truly an accomplished woman who attended Baylor University during World War II and obtained a national baton-twirling championship in 1939. I have filed House Resolution 66 to commemorate this occasion and have asked Rep. Trent Ashby who represents her in Zavalla to joint-author this resolution with me.

In conclusion, it is your money, your rights, your state, and your Capitol. Every Texan admits that visiting their Capitol during the biennial legislative session is a great experience. To assist in arranging your visit please call Saul Mendoza, my Chief of Staff, at (512) 463-0490. Or, you can email him at saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov. I trust that God will continue to bless you and your family and through you, the great state of Texas.

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